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ABSTRACT

A survey of the nation's 100 largest business and labor organizations focused on commitment to and support for career education and career education-types of activities at the highest corporate levels within these organizations. The sample of organizations included the 75 largest industrial firms, the 15 largest nonindustrial firms, and the 12 largest labor unions. Interviews were conducted with the individual in each organization who was responsible for educational or community relations. Among the findings was that over one-half of the organizations, other than energy and chemical firms, had some awareness of career education in general. Further, most representatives had a reasonably accurate understanding of the objectives of career education. Only three organizations, or four percent of the sample, had adopted policy statements supporting career education, and only two had issued guidelines for local site or branch-level involvement in career education activities. Over three-fourths of the organizations contacted were engaged in at least some career education-type activities (i.e., activities aimed directly or indirectly at promoting students' awareness of the work world and career planning/decision-making skills). (LRA)

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Business/Industry/Labor Involvement in Career Education: A National Survey[1]

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One of the cornerstones of career education as reflected in the Career Education Incentive Act (PL95-207), is the promotion of active involvement between the education and business/industry/labor communities. However, little documentation exists regarding the nature or extent of private sector involvement in career education at the national level, much less the extent to which such involvement has been stimulated, directly or indirectly, by the Incentive Act program. While specific instances of national business or labor support for career education have been reported (e.g., Education Commisson of the States, 1979; Hutton & Bramlet, 1979; Hensley & Schulman, 1977; Hoyt, 1980), it is not clear whether these represent isolated occurrences or are indicative of a trend. As part of a Department of Education funded rapid feedback evaluation of Incentive Act implementation, AIR staff conducted a survey of business, industry, and labor organizations to obtain some preliminary answers to these questions. The survey was directed to the nation's 100 largest business and labor organizations and focused on commitment to and support for "career education" and career education types of activities at the highest corporate levels within these organizations.

The sample of organizations selected for this survey included the 75 largest industrial firms (determined by sales volume as reported by Fortune

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magazine, 1980), the 15 largest nonindustrial firms (determined by total sales or assets, as appropriate, as reported by Fortune magazine, 1980), and the 12 largest labor unions (determined by number of members, as reported by Information Please Almanac, 1979). Unstructured telephone interviews were conducted with all but 8, or 92%, of these organizations.[2] The composition of the sample is summarized in Table 1.

Interviews were conducted with the individual(s) in each organization who were responsible for educational or community relations. This function was typically carried out by a middle- or high-level management official in the public relations or personnel department. Respondents were asked questions regarding (1) their awareness of career education efforts within elementary and secondary schools, (2) the extent to which their organizations had endorsed career education or career education-type activities, and (3) the nature and extent of support that had been provided to schools by their organizations. Again, the emphasis was on national corporate or organizational support, rather than on support at the local, branch, or regional level. The results of this survey relating to each of these three general questions are summarized below.

Awareness of Career Education

The extent of awareness of career education, overall and by type of organization, is summarized in Table 2. As can be seen, over one-half of the organizations in general, and nearly two-thirds of all organizations other than energy and chemical firms, had some awareness of career education in general. Further, most representatives had a reasonably accurate understanding of the objectives of career education. Pre-employment skills (including both basic skills and information about work and jobs) and career planning/decision making skills were most frequently mentioned as the perceived objectives of career education. Several respondents also made reference to the concept of infusion and to career education being for all students. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents who had heard of career education differentiated it from vocational education.

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[2] Two organizations explicitly declined to participate in the survey; six others effectively declined by virtue of the responsible individuals not being available to talk with us and not returning repeated telephone calls.

Table 1

Numbers of Business and Labor Organizations Interviewed

	Number Selected	Number Interviewed
Industrial Firms		
Energy and Chemical	30	24
Agriculture/Foods/Forest Products	14	13
Other Manufacturing	31	30
TOTAL	75	67
Non-Industrial	15	15
Labor Unions	12	12
TOTAL	102	94

Table 2

Awareness of Career Education among Business, Industrial, and Labor Organizations

	Is R aware of CE movement?		Is R's perception of CE accurate?		Does R differentiate between CE/VE?		Is R aware of CEIA or PL 95-207?		Is R aware of federal CE activities?		Is R aware of state CE activities?		Is R aware of local CE activities?	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Energy & Chemical														
#	7/22	15/22	6/21	15/21	5/20	15/20	2/22	20/22	1/22	21/22	2/22	20/22	2/19	17/19
%	32%	68%	29%	71%	25%	75%	9%	91%	5%	95%	9%	91%	11%	89%
(N=24)														
Ag./Foods/Forest														
#	8/13	5/13	4/13	9/13	4/13	9/13	1/13	12/13	1/13	12/13	1/13	12/13	4/13	9/13
%	62%	38%	31%	69%	31%	69%	8%	92%	8%	92%	8%	92%	31%	69%
(N=13)														
Other Manufacturing														
#	19/31	12/31	14/29	15/29	14/29	15/29	6/29	23/29	6/30	24/30	6/30	24/30	12/30	18/30
%	61%	39%	48%	52%	48%	52%	21%	79%	20%	80%	20%	80%	40%	60%
(N=30)														
Non-Industrial														
#	9/15	6/15	7/14	7/14	7/15	8/15	3/14	11/14	4/14	10/14	2/14	12/14	4/13	9/13
%	60%	40%	50%	50%	47%	53%	21%	79%	29%	71%	14%	86%	31%	69%
(N=15)														
Union														
#	8/12	4/12	5/6	1/6	3/9	6/9	3/12	9/12	4/12	8/12	2/9	7/9	2/8	6/8
%	67%	33%	83%	17%	33%	67%	25%	75%	33%	67%	22%	78%	25%	75%
(N=12)														
TOTAL														
#	51/93	42/93	36/83	47/83	33/86	53/86	15/90	75/90	16/91	75/91	13/88	75/88	24/83	59/83
%	55%	45%	43%	57%	38%	62%	17%	83%	18%	82%	15%	85%	29%	71%
(N=94)														

NOTE: Denominator in all cases indicates total number of respondents whose reply could be categorized as predominantly affirmative or negative.

When asked how they had become aware of career education, surprisingly few individuals mentioned communications from or contacts with federal or state level career education officials. In fact, only 15 (17%) knew of federal or state level career education activities or of the Incentive Act. A few mentioned having heard of career education in the early 1970s, but not having heard anything further in recent years. The majority of respondents who were aware of career education appeared to have learned of it through personal contacts or from local sources. For example, some respondents mentioned learning of career education from their own children, and several mentioned contacts or requests from local schools as their initial source of awareness. As can be seen in Table 2, nearly twice as many respondents reported being aware of local career education activities than reported knowing of federal or state level efforts.

Endorsement of Career Education

Formal endorsement of career education by name was very rare for the sample of organizations contacted, as shown in Table 3. Only three organizations, or 4% of the sample, had adopted policy statements supporting career education, and only two had issued guidelines for local site or branch level involvement in career education activities. However, 11% reported having actively supported state career education legislation and 17% reported supporting federal legislation. Further, 14% of these national organizations had policies advocating support for and involvement in educational programs in general, and 6% had issued guidelines covering such collaborative efforts.

Thus, while explicit endorsements of career education were not prevalent among these organizations, the concept of collaboration with educational institutions did receive some formal support. Informal support, on the other hand, was very pronounced, with 64% of these organizations indicating some level of investment of corporate or organizational resources (e.g., personnel time, facilities and equipment, funds) in education-related programs and activities. While many of these activities were not associated with career education per se, they did represent instances of collaboration between business/labor organizations and educational institutions with the objective of preparing students for post-high school education and careers. Examples of the kinds of activities being carried

Table 3

Formal and Informal Support for Career Education among Business/Industrial/Labor Organizations

	Does R's organization have written CE policy? Y	Does R's organization have written CE policy? N	If yes, when adopted? Year	If yes, was CE the impetus for policy? Y	If yes, was CE the impetus for policy? N	Does R's organization have guidelines for local CE involvement? Y	Does R's organization have guidelines for local CE involvement? N	Does R's organization support state CE legislation? Y	Does R's organization support state CE legislation? N	Does R's organization support federal CE legislation? Y	Does R's organization support federal CE legislation? N	Does R's organization have written policy on educational involvement? Y	Does R's organization have written policy on educational involvement? N	If yes, when adopted? Year	If yes, was CE the impetus for policy? Y	If yes, was CE the impetus for policy? N	Does R's organization have guidelines for educational involvement? Y	Does R's organization have guidelines for educational involvement? N	Does R's organization informally support involvement? Y	Does R's organization informally support involvement? N	If yes, when did support begin? Year	If yes, was CE the impetus for support? Y	If yes, was CE the impetus for support? N
Energy & Chemical																								
#	0	18				0	18	0	5	0	5	3	21		0	2	2	21	15	6		0	15	
	18	18				18	18	5	5	5	5	24	24		2	2	23	23	21	21		15	15	
%	--	100%				--	100%	--	100%	--	100%	13%	87%		--	100%	9%	91%	71%	29%		--	100%	
(N=24)																								
Ag./Foods/Forest																								
#	0	13				0	13	0	6	0	6	2	10		0	2	0	12	9	4		0	9	
	13	13				13	13	6	6	6	6	12	12		2	2	12	12	13	13		9	9	
%	--	100%				--	100%	--	100%	--	100%	17%	83%		--	100%	--	100%	69%	31%		--	100%	
(N=13)																								
Other Manufacturing																								
#	1	28		1	0	2	27	2	11	2	11	3	26		1	1	1	27	18	10		0	19	
	29	29		1	1	29	29	13	13	13	13	29	29		2	2	28	28	28	28		19	19	
%	3%	97%		100%	--	7%	93%	15%	85%	15%	85%	10%	90%		50%	50%	4%	96%	64%	36%		--	100%	
(N=30)																								
Non-Industrial																								
#	0	14				0	14	0	1	0	1	3	11		0	3	2	12	6	5		0	5	
	14	14				14	14	1	1	1	1	14	14		3	3	14	14	11	11		5	5	
%	--	100%				--	100%	--	100%	--	100%	21%	79%		--	100%	14%	86%	55%	45%		--	100%	
(N=15)																								
Union																								
#	2	6		2	0	0	6	1	2	3	2	1	8				0	8	6	5		0	5	
	8	8		2	2	6	6	3	3	5	5	9	9				8	8	11	11		5	5	
%	25%	75%		100%	--	--	100%	33%	67%	60%	40%	11%	89%				--	100%	55%	45%		--	100%	
(N=12)																								
TOTAL																								
#	3	79		3	0	2	78	3	25	5	25	12	76		1	8	5	80	54	30		0	53	
	82	82		3	3	80	80	28	28	30	30	88	88		9	9	85	85	84	84		53	53	
%	4%	96%		100%	--	3%	97%	11%	89%	17%	83%	14%	86%		11%	89%	6%	94%	64%	36%		--	100%	
(N=94)																								

NOTE: Denominator in all cases indicates total number of respondents whose reply could be categorized as predominantly affirmative or negative.

out by business and labor organizations are discussed in the following section.

Nature and Extent of Business/Labor Involvement in Education-Related Programs

The proportions of organizations in the sample, by type, that had engaged in various kinds of education-related activities during the past year are summarized in Table 4. As can be seen, over three-fourths of the organizations contacted were engaged in at least some career education-type activities (i.e., activities aimed directly or indirectly at promoting students' awareness of the work world and career planning/ decision-making skills). Fifty percent or more of the sample reported having provided staff to serve as resource persons in school classes, developing and/or providing materials for use in classrooms, and/or providing work-experience or work-exploration opportunities for students. Somewhat smaller proportions of the sample (25% or less) had been involved in providing equipment to schools, conducting training sessions or workshops, providing work exploration opportunities for teachers, serving on state or local advisory panels, and/or providing funds or other resources (e.g., facilities for meetings, printing services, etc.) for career-related activities.

Examples of many of the specific kinds of activities engaged in by the organizations surveyed are shown in Attachment 1. Within these categories, the level of an organization's investment in these various activities varied widely. For example, some organizations had developed simple PR brochures, which were distributed on request. However, several were spending thousands of dollars (and in a few cases, hundreds of thousands) to develop comprehensive curricula. These materials were intended to be educational, rather than public-relations, in orientation, and the company's name appeared only as a sponsor if at all. Similary, with regard to resource persons, some companies estimated providing 2-3 speakers a year while others provided 20-30 (across several sites) a month. Several respondents indicated their organizations supported the idea of collaboration with schools, but currently lacked the resources to make much contribution. This was most prevalent for companies in fields experiencing economic difficulties, such as the airlines and auto companies. Energy and chemical industry firms, on the other hand, which were enjoying strong

Table 4

Business/Industry/Labor Involvement with Schools

	Has R's organization worked with SEA or LEAs since July 1979?		Materials	Resource persons	Equipment	Training/workshops	Student work experience	Teacher work experience	Funds	Other resources	Advisory council participants	Other	Is this a new activity?		If not, how long conducted? (Since...)		Has activity level increased in past year?		Was CG the impetus for these activities?	
	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Year	Y	N	Y	N	
Energy & Chemical																				
#	20/24	4/24	16	17	5	4	13	4	5	1	3	5	2/18	16/18		7/14	7/14	0/16	16/16	
%	83%	17%	55%	59%	17%	14%	45%	14%	17%	3%	10%	17%	11%	89%		50%	50%	--	100%	
(N=24)																				
Ag.Foods/Forest																				
#	10/13	3/13	6	8	2	1	8	4	4	1	5	2	0/10	10/10		4/8	4/8	1/9	8/9	
%	77%	23%	43%	57%	14%	7%	57%	29%	29%	7%	36%	14%	--	100%		50%	50%	11%	89%	
(N=13)																				
Other Manufacturing																				
#	21/29	8/29	17	16	6	6	13	7	10	6	7	2	1/20	19/20		5/16	11/16	4/18	14/18	
%	72%	28%	55%	52%	19%	19%	42%	23%	32%	19%	23%	6%	5%	95%		31%	69%	22%	78%	
(N=30)																				
Non-Industrial																				
#	12/15	3/15	8	11	3	4	12	6	3	4	3	2	0/11	11/11		4/12	8/12	1/11	10/11	
%	80%	20%	53%	73%	20%	27%	80%	40%	20%	27%	20%	13%	--	100%		33%	67%	9%	91%	
(N=15)																				
Union																				
#	8/11	3/11	8	5	--	2	1	--	1	1	2	2	0/8	8/8		2/6	4/6	2/8	6/8	
%	73%	27%	67%	42%	--	17%	8%	--	8%	8%	17%	17%	--	100%		33%	67%	25%	75%	
(N=12)																				
TOTAL																				
#	71/92	21/92	55	57	16	17	47	21	22	13	15	13	3/67	64/67		22/56	34/56	8/62	54/62	
%	77%	23%	59%	61%	17%	18%	50%	22%	23%	14%	16%	14%	4%	96%		39%	61%	13%	87%	
(N=94)																				

NOTE: Denominator in all cases indicates total number of respondents whose reply could be categorized as predominantly affirmative or negative. Percentages of yes-only categories do not add to the numbers of respondents since respondents could answer yes to more than one category.

profitability, appeared to be especially active (although as a group they were the least aware of career education as a distinct educational effort).

In general, most of the organizational representatives surveyed indicated that implementing career education was not the primary impetus for these collaborative activities. Rather, several cited a desire to inform students (and the public in general) about their field and its role within our economy. (This was especially true of the energy and chemical firms.) A second major factor in these organizations' motivation to collaborate with schools was a sense of obligation to the local community. One respondent characterized this attitude as "It's good business to be a good neighbor." Companies that were the major employer in a community were especially inclined toward this view, and often expressed a somewhat paternalistic attitude regarding the welfare of their employees and their employees' families. A third factor influencing organizations to collaborate with schools concerned recruiting and a desire to improve the "quality" of individuals who would be applying to them for work. Finally, and encouragingly, several respondents indicated that their organization's involvement was in response to direct requests from schools.

As can be seen from the activities listed in the Attachment, many of these efforts are not new ideas but, rather, represent activities that the businesses have engaged in for many years. However, a sizable proportion of respondents (39%) reported that the level of their activity had increased in the past year, relative to previous years. Most attributed this to a greater receptivity and willingness to participate on the part of the public schools, qualities the respondents' associated with declining public funding and greater interest in preparing students for careers rather than college entry.

Summary

In summary, while the level of awareness of career education among the business, industrial, and labor organizations surveyed was not high, there was considerable interest in and support for the objectives of career education. Further, there is clearly considerable support among business and labor organizations for the concept of collaborative efforts aimed at better preparing students for the world of work. These findings indicate that the time may be right for a concerted effort by national

career education leaders to contact and establish plans for coordinated career education involvement by the nation's leading business, industry, and labor organizations.

ATTACHMENT 1

Examples of Business/Industry/Labor Support of Career Education-Type Activities

Materials

Development and distribution of brochures describing organization and associated employment opportunities

Film series describing industry in general (e.g., careers in science and technology)

Film series on economics and role of private enterprise

Mobile van providing short course on particular field (e.g., arts, fossil fuels)

Instructional aids (e.g., workbooks) to accompany films

Special curricula (including objectives and materials) on industries or careers (e.g., role of labor in U.S. history) for infusion in academic programs

Resource Persons

Classroom speakers on occasional basis

Representatives for career fairs, career days

Employees who teach special unit in classes (e.g., on business occupations)

Sponsors for Junior Achievement programs and activities

Equipment

Donating equipment and materials for use in schools (e.g., typewriters, calculators, rubber products)

Underwrite costs of facilities or equipment

Work Experience and Exploration

Summer jobs programs for students

Co-op and Work Study programs

Programs in association with CETA Private Industry Councils

Tours of plant and facilities for students, teachers and counselors

Summer workshops for teachers and counselors to develop on-the-job experience

Invitations to students to attend company functions (e.g., shareholders' meetings)

Funds

Award grants through company-sponsored foundations to local education agencies

Provide awards for achievement or talent searches

Underwrite costs of equipment or special resource persons for schools

Underwrite costs of materials development and dissemination efforts

Underwrite costs of student or teacher participation in special enrichment programs (e.g., summer arts institute, summer college program on science and technology)

Adopt-a-School program participation